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SUBJECT: ACOTA AFRICAN PEACEKEEPING TRAINING TEAM MEETS
WITH FRENCH MILITARY

1. SUMMARY: On 18 April 2005, representatives of the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program office met with officials of the French Joint Staff at the Ministry of Defense to exchange views on our respective peacekeeping capacity enhancement efforts in Africa. The ACOTA team noted the meeting was in the spirit of the May 1997 tripartite Agreement that called for cooperation among the U.S., UK, and France on efforts to enhance African peacekeeping capacities. Major General Bruno Neveux provided an update on the RECAMP program while the ACOTA team outlined current ACOTA priorities. The exchange underlined that the RECAMP and ACOTA programs are complementary. RECAMP focuses on exercising strategic and operational military staffs and on political-military training for African military officers. The ACOTA program focuses on full-scope training for the basic building blocks of African peacekeeping operations -- peacekeeping battalions. General Neveux expressed gratitude for the ACOTA team's consultative initiative and said such consultations would be continued.
END SUMMARY.

2. The ACOTA team (Barbara Hughes, Department of State ACOTA Program Coordinator, and Richard Roan, ACOTA Training Manager) and Emboffs met with Major General Bruno Neveux, Chief of Force Training of the French Joint Staff, and two RECAMP planning officers. They noted the Tripartite Agreement of 22 May 1997 in which the U.S., UK, and France agreed to collaborate on efforts to enhance the peacekeeping capacities of African nations. The ACOTA team sought the French perspective on ACOTA efforts as well as the French vision for future RECAMP exercises.

3. General Neveux expressed gratitude for the ACOTA team's visit and initiative in seeking to exchange views on program plans. He noted that RECAMP and ACOTA had been complementary programs since their inception and expressed confidence that the two programs would continue to be mutually supportive. He stated that RECAMP would continue to focus on training African strategic and operational military staffs and providing politic-military training for African military officers. The General said that while the basic principles underlying RECAMP have not changed, there is a new focus on leadership issues. He stated that the African militaries in general are weak in the areas of command and control, logistics, and work at the political-military level. He did note that he is studying the question of whether or not to continue concluding their RECAMP cycle with a large field exercise as in the past. He reported that Cameroon was under consideration as the next (2006) RECAMP exercise but that a final decision had not been made.

4. The ACOTA team described ACOTA's primary focus on training the "working end" of the African peacekeeping spectrum -- providing deploying peacekeeping battalions with staff and field training. General Neveux agreed with the critical importance of training peacekeepers and noted that ACOTA's work to prepare peacekeeping battalions well complemented RECAMP's efforts at strategic and political-military training. The ACOTA team welcomed French officers to visit future ACOTA training in Africa. General Neveux reciprocated with his commitment to welcoming U.S. officials to RECAMP events. It was agreed to continue to seek synergies in our work toward a common goal, although the General added that we should not be "too nave or optimistic" on such prospects.

5. The ACOTA team has cleared this message.
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